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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000645

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TAGS: PREL PTER IR IZ IS JO

SUBJECT: SENATOR KERRY'S MEETING WITH JORDAN'S INTELLIGENCE CHIEF

REF: A. 05 AMMAN 9818

1B. 05 AMMAN 5456

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale, for reasons 1.5 b and d

¶1. (C) Summary: Senator John Kerry's 90-minute meeting with Jordan's intelligence chief centered on Iraq, and on the intelligence service's worries about Iran's role there and throughout the region. They also discussed Syria and security in Jordan. End summary.

¶2. (C) Senator John Kerry and staff called on General Intelligence Directorate (GID) chief Muhammad Dhahabi January 18 at GID headquarters. Ambassador, SIMO and political chief joined.

Worries Over Iraq

¶3. (C) Dhahabi focused on concerns that Sunni Arabs in Iraq would be excluded from a meaningful role in the next government, leading to an intensification of the violence there and destabilization of the region. &We are scared8 of &a new Persian empire that will use Islam8 and Iraqi Shi,a as a tool.

¶4. (C) In Dhahabi's analysis, the U.S. and its partners needed to prevent the formation of a new Shi,a-Kurdish government that &excluded the Sunnis.8 Regional stability required a &broad national unity government8 in which Sunni Arabs had a real share in power. He also saw a danger that the &the Kurds will move soon to take Kirkuk.8 Such a development, he said, would stoke Sunni Arab insurgency further.

¶5. (C) An &exclusionary8 government and Kurdish domination of Kirkuk would push Iraq dangerously close to de facto &partition8; Dhahabi warned that &Hakim's people8 will move quickly toward a strong federation of southern provinces &that will even include Baghdad.8

Iraq's Shi,as

¶6. (C) Dhahabi pointed to reports that torture occurred in institutions controlled by Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr. He also feared pro-Iranian Shi,a domination of Iraqi security services.

¶7. (C) Kerry asked Dhahabi what he thought of those who argue that Iraqi Shi,a ascendancy would not lead to Iranian domination, because &Sistani cherishes his independence8, and the traditional animosity between Arabs and Persians was stronger than the ties among Shi,a. Dhahabi replied that &Hakim wants Iranian domination.8

Iraq: What to Do?

¶8. (C) Senator Kerry repeatedly asked Dhahabi what more the U.S. should do; Dhahabi replied by praising Ambassador Khalilzad's pressure on all parties to move toward a national unity government; &he needs to keep at it.8

¶9. (C) Kerry observed that the Shi,a wanted a measure of power commensurate with their share of the population. Obviously many Sunni Arabs were worried, but &what do you get Sistani to give up from the democratic share of power they've earned?8 Were there key amendments to the constitution, for instance, on which Shi,a compromise should be sought? Dhahabi replied &that won't be easy.8 Kerry asked what the new government should look like. Dhahabi said it should include Tawafiq and Allawi along with Kurds and Shi,a. &We want Allawi in the new government.8 He should have a ministry &with teeth8 like defense, interior, or oil, or perhaps head the National Security Council.

¶10. (C) Kerry observed that &ministries and funding can be negotiated, maybe even the constitutional provisions on oil revenue, but will that satisfy the Sunnis?8 Dhahabi thought it would. Kerry pressed, asking whether Sunnis would accept some form of federalism. Dhahabi thought they would,

as long as it was a federalism that did not start a process that ended in partition, as it seemed the current arrangement would.

¶11. (C) Would a guarantee of reconstruction money encourage more Sunnis to engage in peaceful politics, the Senator asked? Dhahabi answered that an Anbar Marshall Plan⁸ would indeed have a positive effect. King Abdullah, he said, would raise a proposal along these lines when he meets with President Bush in February.

Iran

¶12. (C) Dhahabi described Iranian President Ahmadinejad as &calculating.⁸ Iran's ambitions, whether in Iraq or on nuclear issues, could go unchecked.⁸ Asked about a military option, Dhahabi replied &it's not viable because your soldiers in Iraq will be like the (Embassy Tehran) hostages of 1979.⁸ Even effective, multilateral sanctions might trigger &an Iranian response against your soldiers in Iraq.⁸

Syria

¶13. (C) Many insurgents were crossing into Iraq from Syria, Dhahabi claimed. &Bashar is engaging in brinksmanship, and thinks he can outlast U.S. pressure.⁸ Asked about Syrian opposition, Dhahabi said there is nothing, externally or internally. Khaddam is discredited because of his reputation for corruption and past association the current regime. The Syrian regime's pillars are &solid.⁸

Regional Intel Chiefs Consulting on Iraq

¶14. (S/NF) Dhahabi said a committee of intelligence service chiefs from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait, Egypt and the Emirates that had been meeting since November. It was coordinating efforts to bolster moderate Iraqi Sunnis and help them gain traction in the political process. Dhahabi said the Saudis had been instrumental in organizing this initiative.

GID Focused on Disrupting New Attacks Inside Jordan

¶15. (S/NF) Dhahabi said the GID had disrupted more than eighty attempts by terrorists to attack GOJ and western targets in Jordan; many of these attempts had been directed against the GID building. He said the GOJ repeatedly foiled attempts using Jordanian operatives, &so the terrorists have switched to using Iraqis and Syrians,⁸ as in the cases of the August 19 rocket attacks in Aqaba, and the November 9 Amman hotel bombings. Dhahabi expected Zarqawi and his ilk to avoid future mass casualties among Jordanian civilians, and to redouble their attempts to hit GOJ and western targets.

Participants

¶16. (S/NF) Participants in the meeting, which began at 8:00 PM, included:

Jordan:
General Intelligence Director Muhammad Dhahabi
GID Iraqi affairs specialist Sa,di Za,tari
Royal Court Advisor Abdullah Woreikat

U.S.:
Senator John Kerry
Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffer Nancy Stetson
Military escort Maj. John Ulrich, USA
Ambassador
Amman SIMO Chief
PolCouns (notetaker)

¶17. (U) Codel Kerry cleared this message.

Hale